Wyoming
Department of Agriculture

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Brian Amme
Vegetation EIS Project Manager, BLM
PO Box 12000
Reno, NV 89520.0006

Dear Mr. Amme:

Following are the comments from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Vegetation Treatment Using Herbicides on BLM Land in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Environmental Report (ER).

Our comments are specific to our mission within state government: dedication to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this proposal will have major impacts upon our agriculture industry, our natural resources and the welfare of our citizens, we believe it is important to inform us on proposed actions and decisions so we can continue to express pertinent issues and concerns.

We support the BLM on their efforts to increase weed control from 2 million to over 6 million acres. Weeds are a problem throughout the West. Wyoming is currently under massive energy and residential development. Surface disturbances in these areas are creating a window of opportunity for noxious and invasive weeds to establish. We support BLM's use of the five treatment methods: mechanical, prescribed fire, chemical, biological, and manual. The following comments are to support Alternative 2: increase the number of acres treated using herbicides by about 600,000 acres annually and use several new herbicides in addition to currently approved herbicides.

We understand there is some opposition from environmental organizations regarding the use of herbicides on BLM lands. They oppose these herbicides citing possible negative effects to humans, water quality, and non-targeted plant and wildlife species. The criticism of chemical treatment by these organizations is unwarranted. Weed expansion will be exponential without the use of herbicides. When properly applied, herbicides inflict less damage to non-targeted plant species than mechanical treatments or fire.[1] Responsible use of research-tested herbicides to battle noxious and invasive weeds can significantly advance all of our land management programs. Chemical treatments not only will reduce weeds, but also improve wildlife habitat for endangered species and reduce the risk of large wildfires. Prescribed burning, as well as prescribed livestock grazing, herbicides and mechanical treatments, can be used to enhance sage-

[1] "Ecology and Management of Sage-Grouse and Sage-Grouse Habitat," Society for Range Mangement, 4

grouse habitat by purposely reducing sagebrush canopy cover where dense sagebrush canopy cover limits understory forbs and grasses.[2]

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "the primary focus of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) was to provide federal control of pesticide distribution, sale and use. EPA is authorized under FIFRA not only to study the consequences of pesticide usage but also to require users (farmers, utility companies, and others) to register when purchasing pesticides. Through later amendments to the law, users also must take exams for certification as applicators of pesticides. All pesticides used in the U.S. must be registered (licensed) by EPA. Registration assures that pesticides will be properly labeled and that if applied in accordance with specifications, will not cause unreasonable harm to the environment." (http://www.epa.gov/region5/defs/html/fifra.htm)

We are including toxicity facts on the following herbicides, which may be new or already in use: diflufenzopyr, diquat, fluridone, imazapic, chlorsulfuron, imazapyr, metsulfuron methyl and sulfometuron methyl. As a reminder, EPA uses the following categories I, II, III, IV to determine the levels of toxicity. Category I is the most toxic with the word "Danger" printed on the label. Category II is less toxic than I and has the word "Warning." Category III is less toxic than II and has "Caution." Finally, Category IV is the least toxic and may have the word "Caution" attached to the label.

Diflufenzopyr: Trade Name: Distinct™

- Acute oral, dermal and inhilation toxicity level: IV
- Diflufenzopyr is practically non-toxic on an acute basis to avian species, low toxicity to small mammals, and practically non-toxic to honey bees.
- Based on proposed uses, EPA does not expect significant quantities to reach drinking water resources.
- Slightly toxic to practically non-toxic to freshwater organisms.

Diquat: Trade names include Aquacide, Aquakill, Dextrone, Diquat, Reglone, Reglox, Reward, Tag, Torpedo, Vegetrole and Weedtrine-D.

- Acute ingestion toxicity level: I – II. **Cattle are sensitive to this herbicide.**
- Acute dermal toxicity level: II
- Diquat is slightly to moderately toxic to birds, moderately to practically nontoxic to fish and aquatic invertebrates, and non toxic to honey bees.
- Diquat will not easily leach through the soil, and remains biologically inactive in surface waters.

Fluridone: Trade Name: Sonar®

- Laboratory animals showed little sign of toxicity when fed levels far exceeding potential human exposure.
- ¼ mile distance to functioning water intakes
- There are no swimming or fishing restrictions

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[2] "Ecology and Management of Sage-Grouse and Sage-Grouse Habitat," Society for Range Mangement, 4

- Floridone lacks the ability to leach, therefore reach groundwater

Imazapic: Trade Names: Plateau®, Cadre®, Plateau Eco-Paks®

- Acute dermal and oral toxicity level: IV
- Relatively non-toxic to terrestrial and aquatic mammals, birds and amphibians. Non-toxic to honey bees. Moderately toxic to fish.
- Imazapic is not considered carcinogenic in humans.
- No indication of potential for imazapic herbicide to move from soils with surface water

Chlorsulfuron: Trade Name Telar®

- Acute oral toxicity level: IV, dermal: III, inhalation: III
- The potential for leaching into ground water is high in permeable soils.
- Practically non-toxic to most fish, aquatic invertebrate animals, birds and mammals
- May be a hazard to endangered plants, but low hazard level to endangered animals
- The exposure levels a person could receive from these sources are below levels shown to cause harmful effect in laboratory studies.

Imazapyr: Trade Name: Arsenal®, Chopper®, Contain®

- Acute oral toxicity level: IV, dermal toxicity: III
- Imazapyr has a low potential for leaching into ground water. Application should not occur in runoff areas.
- Practically non-toxic to mammals and birds, low toxicity in honey bees
- The exposure levels a person could receive from these sources are below levels shown to cause harmful effect in laboratory studies.

Metsulfuron methyl: Trade Name: Escort®, Ally®

- Acute oral toxicity level: IV, dermal toxicity: III
- Metsulfuron methyl can contaminate ground water at very low concentrations by leaching through silt loam and sand soils. Surface waters may also be susceptible.
- Metsulfuron methyl is practically non-toxic to fish and aquatic invertebrates, non-toxic to birds and mammals, and practically non-toxic to honey bees.

Sulfometuron methyl: Trade Name: Oust®

- Acute oral toxicity level: IV, dermal toxicity: II
- Sulfometuron methyl is more readily active in low pH and high organic matters versus high pH and low organic content.
- Ground water contamination can occur depending on soil type, pH, and organic matter.
- Sulfometuron methyl is slightly toxic to fish and aquatic invertebrates and only slightly toxic to mammals and birds.

The only herbicide the WDA has concern with is diquat. The use of this product could be detrimental to cattle grazing on BLM lands post-application. Pesticides with diquat as the active ingredient typically have label restrictions on grazing, and the use of the treated area as food crop. Therefore, we request diquat only be used in areas or situations where livestock will not be

exposed to treated vegetation. However, it is evident that the application of diquat at the labeled rate, will have little to-no effect on the environment, and therefore we support its inclusion on the BLM approved pesticide list.

We continue to support BLM in their efforts to reduce the noxious and invasive weeds throughout the West.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

John Etchepare
Director

JE/jw

Cc: Governor's Planning Office
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
Wyoming State Grazing Board
Wyoming State BLM Office